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Farm Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture

Office of Communications

Washington, DC 20250-1340

Letter No. 2655

March 25, 1994

GETTING A BOOST -- A USDA report shows that under the Uruguay round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) the United States will boost its exports by over a billion dollars to nearly \$5 billion by the year 2000, and up to \$8 billion in 2005. Grains and animal products will account for almost 75% of the increase. The report, "Effects of the Uruguay Round on U.S. Agricultural Products," notes that employment generated by exports is expected to increase by 112,000 jobs in 2000, and reach 190,000 new jobs in 2005. U.S. Farm sector net income under GATT is expected to be raised \$1 billion in 2000, and up to \$2.5 billion five years later. Government outlays should decline by \$1.3 billion in the year 2000, and as much as \$2.6 billion in 2005. Contact: Steve Kinsella (202) 720-4623.

CRP LAND -- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts begin expiring in 1995. A recent USDA survey found that over 40 percent of the reserve acreage will be returned to production when the contracts expire. About 25 percent of the land will be used for hay production or livestock grazing, and 13 percent will be rented to other farmers. Under the CRP, 36 million acres of environmentally sensitive land was retired from production for 10 to 15 years. It is not known whether Congress will renew expiring contracts. Contact: Tim Osborn (202) 219-0403.

REVENUE GUARANTEE -- Guaranteeing a farmer's return for a given crop has been getting increased attention. Many of the designs guarantee that per-acre revenue would not fall below some fraction of a revenue target. The target would be either a fixed revenue or a moving average of past revenues. The revenue guarantee approach could streamline the current array of farm commodity programs into one program. The system will likely be an issue in the 1995 farm bill debate. Contact: Cathy Greene (202) 219-0313.

MORE VEGGIES -- USDA has exceeded its goal of doubling the amount of fresh produce purchased for the National School Lunch Program, providing almost 21 million pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables to schools across the nation in the 1993-94 school year. The amount purchased during the previous school year was 9 million pounds. In addition a bonus distribution of nearly 9 million pounds has been purchased this year compared with almost 4 million pounds last year. Contact: Ron Webster (703) 305-2276.

COOKING/HANDLING LABELS -- USDA is requiring cooking and handling labels be placed on certain meat and poultry products. Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy has announced that all raw or partially cooked ground meat and poultry must have safe cooking and handling labels. Espy also announced that all other raw or partially cooked meat and poultry products must have the labels by July 6, 1994. A final rule mandating the labels will be published in the Federal Register and take effect 60 days after publication. After July 6, USDA will require nutrition labeling on processed meat and poultry products in addition to the safe cooking and handling information. Contact: Steve Kinsella (202) 720-4623.

STRAWBERRIES -- The 1994 strawberry crop is likely to set a record, continuing a nearly unbroken chain of records for the past 20 years. Growers in California and Florida have expanded acreage to meet the increasing demand from consumers. While larger acreage has boosted production an even larger role has been played by increasing yields. National average yields have tripled in the last 20 years to 14 tons per acre. Yields in California have been even higher, reaching 24 tons per acre. California's increase is due to adoption of an annual planting system, development of new varieties, and soil fumigation. U.S. grown strawberries are now second in value only to apples. Strawberries remain a bargain for consumers. Inflation-adjusted prices have remained flat since 1980. Contact: Diane Bertelsen (202) 219-0884.

PECAN PROMOTION PLAN ENDED -- Pecan producers and importers have voted to terminate the Pecan Promotion and Research Plan. In the referendum 63 percent voted against the program that had been in effect since 1992. All activities under the plan end within six months of the referendum vote published in the March 15 Federal Register. Contact: Connie Crunkleton (202) 720-8998.

QUARANTINE TO END -- No evidence of citrus canker has been found in Florida for two years, therefore USDA is proposing to remove a citrus canker quarantine from the remaining three counties where the disease existed. B. Glen Lee, deputy administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, says the action removes restrictions on the movement of citrus plants, plant parts and fresh fruit. The disease was first detected in Florida in 1984. Citrus canker is a plant disease caused by a bacterium. It is eradicated by destroying all infected plants. Contact: Ed Curlett (301) 436-3256.

INSECT CONTROL -- Daylight is getting longer and warm weather begins its trek north. Along with it come flying insects such as mosquitoes, midges, flies and fleas. A new way of controlling the pests has been found by using a hormone that interferes with egg production and development. USDA Agricultural Research Service scientists have developed a synthetic chemical that mimics the hormone used by the pests to produce eggs. The hormone is only present during certain times of the insect's life cycle, and if ingested at the wrong time egg production is blocked. The discovery opens the way to controlling harmful insects without using harsh chemicals. Contact: Paul Flinn (919) 776-2707.

HUNGER FORUM -- The final USDA regional hunger forum will be held April 22 in Dayton, OH. Previous regional forums were held in Burlington, VT; McAllen, TX; and Kansas City, MO. Contact: Laura Trivers (703) 305-2039.

DON'T CHEW THE FAT -- Consumers face a challenge in cutting fat intake when eating out, but it can be done. Here's an example using chicken. Roasted chicken contains less fat than fried chicken, particularly if a rotisserie is used, a cooking method that allows the fat to drain away from the meat. Consumers can reduce fat intake by as much as a fourth if they choose roasted over fried chicken, and by as much as two-thirds if they choose white meat over dark, trim away all visible fat, and discard the skin. Contact: Judith Putnam (202) 219-0870.

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA #1920 -- The final steps are now being taken to implement the GATT agreement. Brenda Curtis talks with USDA's principal economic advisor Joe Glauber about the process and economic impact of the historic trade agreement. (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 minute documentary.)

CONSUMER TIME #1402 -- Looking at very low-fat diets; losing big money through credit card fraud; USDA's plan to make food safer; it's raining new food products; never too early to eat healthy. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 to 3 minute consumer features.)

AGRITAPE FEATURES #1912 -- Biocontrol complications; soybean gene map; twinning technology available; wheat, to clean or not to clean; tall forage. (Weekly reel of features.)

UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE -- Thursday, March 31, grain stocks, prospective plantings, rice stocks, world livestock situation, world tobacco situation; Friday, April 1, horticultural products review; Tuesday, April 5, tobacco outlook, weekly weather and crop report. These are the USDA reports we know about in advance. Our Newsline carries many stories every day which are not listed in this lineup. Please don't let the lack of a story listing keep you from calling.

**USDA RADIO NEWSLINE (202) 488-8358 or 8359
COMREX ENCODED (202) 720-2545**
Material changed at 5 p.m., EDT, each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION SERVICE

FEATURES -- Pat O'Leary reports on new uses for farm products with five stories from the National Agriculture Day exhibit in Washington, D.C. Includes: new farm products are Ag Day theme; defense vehicle tests new farm products; new soybean product funded by USDA; excess wool absorbs oil spills; milkweed makes pillows and jobs.

ACTUALITIES -- Patricia Jensen, acting assistant secretary for Marketing and Inspection Programs, on safe handling labels for meat and poultry (with B-roll of labels).

Available on Satellite Galaxy 4, channel 23, audio 6.2 or 6.8, downlink frequency 4160 MHz.: Thursdays from 7:30 - 7:45 p.m., EDT; Saturdays 10:00 a.m., EDT; Mondays 8:00 a.m., EDT.

OFFMIKE

NEARY 1,000...4th graders were the highlight at National Agriculture Day festivities, says Skip Davis (WASK, Lafayette, IN). Tour guides escorted groups of 20 children through exhibits at the county fairground. After the tour Extension volunteers provided cookies, and served soft drinks that contained corn sugar processed locally. The kids and the public improved their knowledge about agriculture. Skip says he and his son and daughter were extras in the recently released movie "Blue Chips." Basketball and audience scenes were shot locally.

PRODUCERS...are watching corn prices, says John Everly (KDTH, Dubuque, IA). Brokers are saying prices won't go out of sight, which is encouraging pork producers. John says while producers are waiting for the ground to dry they are giving BST a workout in coffee shops. Many say they aren't set up to use it.

SUPPLIES...have been purchased and producers are ready for warmer weather, says Jim Bernhardt (KSIR, Colorado Farm-Ranch Network). Let the warm temperatures roll.

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Room 528A
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TRIUMPH OF AGRICULTURE...two-day display earlier this month in Omaha found producers in an optimistic mood, says Roger Flemmer (KFAB, Omaha, NE). It was encouraging to hear producers who came though tough times last year say that they are ready to get into the fields. Roger says the state conventions for corn, sorghum, and soybean producers were combined this year and attracted major speakers.

CONGRATULATIONS...to Orion Samuelson (WGN/Tribune Network, Chicago) for serving as M.C. at the National Agriculture Day Congressional Reception in Washington, D.C., March 17.

THINKING POSITIVE...and hoping for a normal year is the attitude of producers served by Judy Stratman (WNAX, Yankton, SD). Judy is the coordinator for this year's NAFB north central region meeting. Judy made an observation that would make many previous convention leaders nod in approval, saying that when the convention is concluded it makes one appreciate the ordinary stress of their regular job. Lets give all the chairpersons and coordinators a round of applause this year.

VIC POWELL *Vic Powell*
Office of Communications